



PRESS RELEASE
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**EAI'S ECONOMIC REVIEW OF 45' CHANNEL PROJECT CALLED
'INHERENTLY FLAWED' BY MARITIME BUSINESS AND LABOR**

DELAWARE RIVER PORTS – Following the early release of Economic Analysis, Inc. report entitled, “Proposed Delaware River Channel Deepening Project: Review and Critique of Economic Analyses,” the report was quickly put to task by the port community. “The review is incredibly deficient in its analysis of the project. What we have here is an attempt by academics to impose their opinions upon our region,” said Dennis Rochford, President of the Maritime Exchange for the Delaware River and Bay. “Opinions have no place in studies of fact,” continued Rochford. “This review ignores cogent points to mask the true economic benefits of the 45’ Main Channel Deepening Project.”

The Maritime Exchange for the Delaware River and Bay, representing nearly 280 port and maritime businesses and labor organizations from Delaware, New Jersey, and Pennsylvania, spearheaded the effort to rapidly and thoroughly appraise this review. The review was prepared as part of the ongoing Delaware state dredging permit process and was forced to be released by a freedom of information request by the media.

The report freely admits its lack of scope several times throughout the text, including statements such as “nor did we undertake any detailed analyses of issues associated with the project” and “we were not able to substantiate these numbers, given the time and resources available.” It cited their “limited budget or time available for our review to undertake the substantial research needed to arrive at an independent estimate of the benefits and costs to Delaware.” Rochford believes these statements alone undermine the validity of the report and furthermore, the report is awash with misinterpreted statements, disregard for facts, and the selective abandonment of established cost/benefit analyses.

The Port of Wilmington, Delaware fully intends to utilize the 45’ main channel and has publicly stated this in several media reports and during the DNREC public hearings. “The use of a 45’ channel is a part of our strategic plan. To ignore a significant waterway would be akin to the port not utilizing connector ramps to I-495,” said R. Adam McBride, Executive Director of the port. The report discounts any benefits to the port due to a perceived lack of data on costs associated with the 45’ channel. By doing so, the report neglected one of the key beneficiaries to the project.

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“Oil cargo figures are also blatantly wrong in this report,” stated Rochford. According to the review, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers assumed a 40 percent cumulative increase in oil imports through the Delaware River over the period from 1992 to 2000. Nevertheless, the review states, “available data shows that international crude deliveries through Delaware Bay have not increased over 1990-1999.” Rochford rejected this assumption stating, “figures available from the Waterborne Commerce Statistics Center show an increase of 36.7% from 1992 to 2000.” In 1992, crude oil imports through the Delaware River port system totaled 51,907,000 tons. By 2000, this number had grown to 70,949,000. “The fact that these professionals missed this readily available figure is alarming,” continued Rochford.

With beach replenishment being an important issue to the state of Delaware, it was addressed in the review. However, the review assumed that the replenishment would occur even without the deepening but failed to include the fact that the sand byproduct from the deepening would lower the costs of replenishment substantially. “The review also completely missed the point on the employment of Delaware residents who will replenish our beaches,” stated Rochford. “One cannot simply ignore the fact that this project would provide 300 individuals with a quality income.”

The importance of the project to labor was underscored by John McCann, President of the Philadelphia/Wilmington District Council International Longshoremen's Association. “This review neglects the fact that this project will allow dockworkers to continue working and support their families. Without this improvement to the river, our port’s business will suffer irreparably.”

Throughout the region, the maritime community was adamant in its rejection of the review. “Interjecting personal views on the environment by a so-called ‘impartial’ reviewer does the public a disservice,” commented Rochford on the review. “Due to its numerous flaws and shortcomings, this review should be given little if any weight in the final DNREC decision.”

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